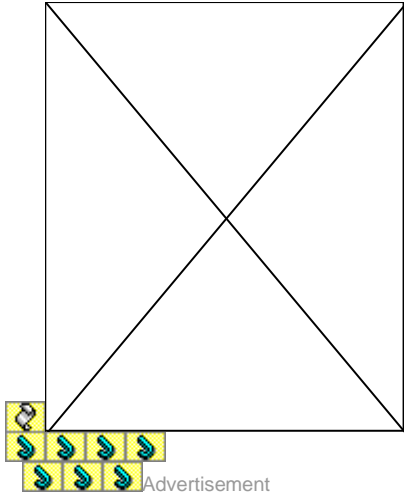


Mar 3, 3:40 PM EST

## EPA adds 2 Ill. sites to Superfund priorities list

BY KAREN HAWKINS and JIM SUHR  
Associated Press Writers



**Buy AP Photo Reprints**



**Your Questions Answered**



Ask AP: Tax credits, disposing of recalled goods

CHICAGO (AP) -- The Environmental Protection Agency has added a cluster of waste-disposal

sites in Chicago and a former copper smelter in southern Illinois to its list of Superfund locations, allowing the government to go after polluters and force them to pay up for cleanup.

The 87-acre Lake Calumet Cluster in Chicago and the former Chemetco smelter in Madison County near St. Louis were among 10 the EPA added this week to its Superfund National Priorities List. The listing will enable the EPA to continue its investigation into the contamination's extent and pinpoint the best way to deal with it.

The Lake Calumet Cluster, made up of four separate parcels on Chicago's southeast side, is surrounded by wetlands, landfills and railroad tracks. The cluster site was also wetlands before industrial and chemical waste and steel mill slag were dumped there from the 1940s to the 1970s, leaving behind a host of contaminants including arsenic, cyanide and benzene.

"A lot of this contamination was created before there was an EPA, state or federal," said Maggie Carson, spokeswoman for Illinois Environmental Protection Agency.

"It's been an issue for literally decades," she said.

Contaminated soil and surface water runoff are affecting the nearby wetlands, which are used by 14 federal or state endangered or threatened species, environmental officials said. A marsh used for fishing is also being contaminated.

"Environmentally, it's kind of a horror," Carson said "There are so many types of (and) different kinds of contaminates. It's ecologically very harmful."

State and federal environmental officials have been periodically removing waste from the site, and the state EPA carted away 6,000 drums and 341,000 gallons of liquid and semisolid waste in the mid-1980s.

Superfund is a federal program that investigates and cleans up the most complex and uncontrolled hazardous waste sites in the country.

The Chemetco site, near Hartford in Madison County just northeast of St. Louis, was a secondary copper smelter from 1969 to 2001 before operators filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy protection while the company was in the midst of a court-imposed cleanup of the tainted property. The EPA ordered the site sealed.

In 2000, the company was found guilty of using a secret pipeline to dump hazardous waste into a tributary of the Mississippi River for a decade before regulators found it in the mid-1990s. The status of the \$3.8 million in fines against the company for conspiracy and violating the federal Clean Water Act was not immediately clear Tuesday.

Several Chemetco workers were convicted of conspiracy in the case, sentenced to home detention and fined. Denis Feron, the company's 81-year-old former president who prosecutors say ordered the secret pipeline, remains a fugitive and has been believed to be living in Belgium.

The EPA has said more than 500,000 cubic yards of processing sludge and other hazardous materials were left there, and elevated levels of the heavy metals copper, lead and cadmium have been found in sediments in onsite wetlands and a nearby lake.

A top environmentalist in the region cheered the EPA's latest move involving Chemetco as long overdue - and proof the tainted site hasn't been forgotten.

"It's definitely a positive sign. There are really bad poisons on that land, and it's been sitting there quite a while," said Kathy Andria, a member of the Sierra Club and the American Bottom Conservancy groups. Though U.S. taxpayers may have to cover the cleanup's costs, Andria said most, if not all, of the tab should come from those responsible for the pollution - an unlikely prospect since the company went bankrupt.

"I don't think they've been held to account," she said. "This whole thing needs to be brought to justice."

----

Suhr reported from St. Louis.

© 2010 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed. Learn more about our [Privacy Policy](#).

[http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/I/IL\\_SUPERFUND\\_SITES\\_ILLINOIS?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2010-03-03-15-40-52](http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/I/IL_SUPERFUND_SITES_ILLINOIS?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2010-03-03-15-40-52)

accessed 3/5/10